

Feedback and Modified Holland Street Safety Proposal in Response to the City Proposal Presented on September 21, 2022 via Zoom

Submitted by Eleanor Ramsay-Maldonado

Currently car-free pedestrian, user of Mass Transit, former/occasional cyclist, Somerville homeowner since 1993, Disabled mother with car and placard lives with us

After attending the Zoom-only presentation, listening to all of the speakers, and studying the City plans, I am concerned about the significant use-change for this part of Somerville. Because I feel so strongly that this is rushed and retrofitted, I have spent some time envisioning a proposal that also focuses on traffic calming and pedestrian safety. Rather than banishing parking for residents and visitors and creating a car and cycle commuter corridor, we need to reduce the speed of all vehicles. We also should be honest about E-Bikes, which can reach speeds of 15+ miles per hour and are increasingly being used by bike commuters. Narrow bike lanes put E-Bikes, powered scooters and aggressive riders in the same row as slower riders, Blue Bike riders and children.

I have hoped for traffic calming measures along this stretch of Holland St and Cameron Ave, where I have owned a home since 1993, since the day I moved in and discovered I had a box seat to the problems of this intersection. The primary cause of the backups, and danger to pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike, is the speed that *all* vehicles achieve going downhill on Holland from Teele Square. Without a Stop sign, they fly through the intersection, increasing speed towards Davis Square unless traffic slows them down. This also causes Cameron Ave, which has a Stop sign and a bike lane on the uphill length, to become hopelessly backed up, sometimes as far down as the Cambridge line, every single weekday for hours at a stretch.

While the new pedestrian islands have helped slow traffic, the safest thing the City can do for the residents, cyclists, and drivers in this area is put a Stop sign at the corner of Holland St and Cameron Ave in the direction of Davis Square. This allows the turning traffic that backs up going West on Holland, and coming up the hill to the Cameron T-section, a chance to keep moving, and brings the speeding cars, buses, trucks and cycles to a stop. It would also keep drivers from turning onto Cameron at a high rate of speed and continuing speeding downhill, which they do everyday.

If the City wants to create protected lanes for cyclists on narrow two-way streets they should do it properly and raise those lanes to sidewalk height. Bollards on skinny streets make what little parking that remains difficult to maneuver and puts passengers directly in the travel lane while trying to get in or out of their cars. The current proposal from the City has no safe place for anyone traveling from Teele Square to Davis Square to pull over. Not for deliveries, for an emergency, to pick someone up or drop them off at a home, the T, the Park, or to get a cab or ride-share. It means pedestrians are crossing the street where fast moving drivers and cyclists will be the norm. This proposed design is for commuters, not for the neighbors, visitors or businesses in the area.

Holland Street Safety - Teele Square

Submitted by Eleanor Ramsay
Sept 29, 2022



Concerns with City Proposal:

- Red boxes show where driveways and parking lots intersect the "protected" lane
- Narrow two-way street
- Fire Trucks will be exiting and entering the station
- Downhill drivers have nowhere to pull over
- Cars and Cyclists already speed down the hill

This Proposal:

- The Corner of Holland and Cameron Ave needs a Stop sign in the direction of Davis Square to stop the downhill traffic
- Raising the western cycle path in front of the TAB building provides a smoother, safer route through the intersection
- Arrange with Tufts to use parking lot, have Blue Bike station and Bike parking

Teele Square to Cameron Ave

The current sidewalk changes at Holland and Cameron have created awkward angles that force cyclists into traffic at the intersection, behind the protruding Bus Stop, and then back out into traffic where the second Tufts Parking Lot is. A raised lane that begins along the TAB building front Parking Lot would keep the West moving cyclists out of this dangerous intersection.

Another dangerous spot is the Exit from the TAB front parking lot. I'd strongly recommend requesting that Tufts either switch the Exit and Entrance or, at least, make the current Exit a Right Turn Only. Drivers are trying to make a Left turn around the new pedestrian islands and it's not safe.

Cyclists can use help on the narrow uphill toward Teele Sq. It would be nice to continue the raised bike path through the intersection of Holland and Broadway at Teele Sq. (There are 4 driveway/parking lots, plus the large Tufts lot that need to be considered.) That said, the street will become very narrow if *any* modifications are made to this stretch. It's already a tight squeeze.

A bike box should be painted at the intersection of Broadway and Holland. That would make it safer for bikes turning left onto Broadway toward Rt. 16.

Downhill, from Teele to Cameron, a protected lane creates a safer corridor but *only* if there is a Stop sign and Bike box at Cameron. Another option would be to prohibit parking during the morning rush. There are businesses along that stretch that will be impacted because there would be no place to pull over, for any reason, and this is a concern. Fire/Emergency Vehicles also use this stretch exiting the station.

The only thing that makes any of this reduction in parking work would be an arrangement with Tufts to let the public use their parking lot for a reasonable fee and promote this access. It is almost completely empty all the time. If it could be used for visitors to Teele Square and the Somerville public using services at the TAB building, the frustration of losing so much parking could be reduced. Without this concession/arrangement, none of the proposed changes really work. This would also be a good place to put the Teele Square Blue Bike station and additional bike parking.

Holland Street Safety - Residential / Park

Submitted by Eleanor Ramsay
Sept 29, 2022



Concerns with City Proposal:

- Bollard bikeway and loss of parking creates dangerous speed corridor
- Nowhere for residents to pull over or park
- The H/C Park and Somerville Traffic and Parking bring visitors from all over the city
- Also a Dense Residential Neighborhood

This Proposal:

- Make this section a low-speed (15mph) sharrow for all vehicles
- Install electric crosswalk light at the H/C Park crossing
- Paint a crosswalk at Irving and Thorndike. This is a dangerous place for pedestrians

Cameron Ave to Irving and Thorndike Street

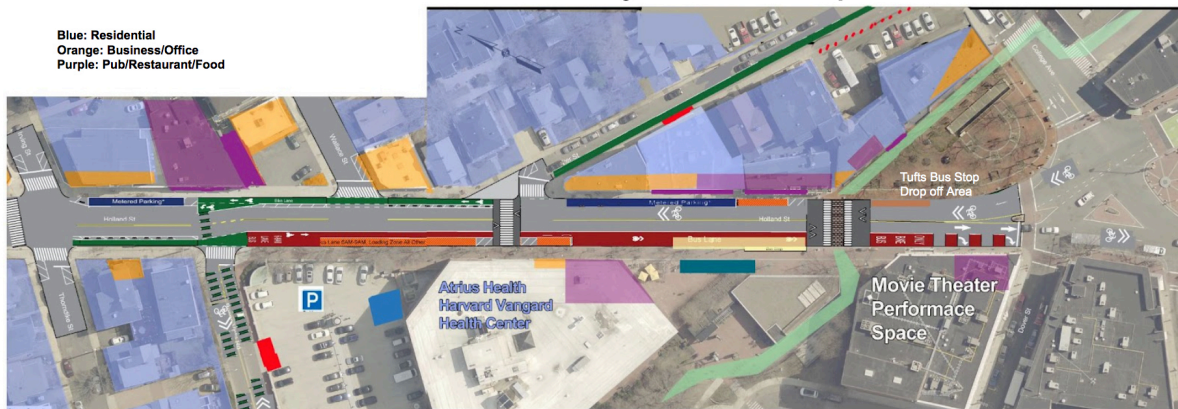
This is a densely populated residential area. It is unreasonable to turn this stretch of road into a speed corridor. Many of the residents live in apartments without driveways or private parking. They need to be able to access their homes, and receive visitors and deliveries. Most of the shops and restaurants have tenants living above them.

This should be a low-speed sharrow (all bicycle-legal roads are sharrows), clearly marked, and with an all-vehicle speed limit of 15 miles per hour. This would make this stretch livable and has been promised for a long time. The Hodgkins/Curtin Park attracts families from all over Somerville. Regional youth team sports are played there. It's not reasonable to take away most of the parking. It's ageist and ableist and unnecessary along this stretch of road.

There really needs to be a crosswalk at Holland and Irving/Thorndike. Pedestrians will continue to cross the street there and be in danger if it's not painted in. The goal should be traffic calming, pedestrian friendly.

Holland Street Safety - Davis Square

Submitted by Eleanor Ramsay
Sept 29, 2022



Concerns with City Proposal:

- Davis Square is turned into a commuter thoroughway
- Bollard lane on curve not necessary and ignores current use, pedestrians and residents
- Nowhere for anyone traveling west to pull over, out of moving traffic

This Proposal:

- Winter Street is a faster/safer route to Teele Square
- Restore Parking/Drop-off/Tufts Bus area at the curve and move bike path to Winter Street
- Make Buena Vista a clearly striped low speed shared route (bikes take full lane always both directions).

Davis Square

As vehicles head toward Davis Square, congestion from the red lights usually backs up traffic. The plan to switch more of this stretch to Bus/Bike lane makes sense and is already working in part. The Loading area should be shifted so it starts later in the shared lane and some is on the other side of the crosswalk. Many elderly patients are being picked up and dropped off at the Health Center entrance. It's also not unusual for Ambulances to be called.

Turning onto Buena Vista Rd is one of the more dangerous places in the Square for pedestrians, bicycles and cars. It's a narrow street with a blind turn and the entrances/exits for the Parking Lot. The speed bump has helped slow traffic but the road remains dangerous. Prohibiting trucks and marking this whole narrow stretch as a green stripe shared street (bikes take the whole lane always) knits it to the Community Path and reminds drivers that this is a populous pedestrian/cyclist area.

The curve at Davis Square Park (College to Holland) is not an appropriate place for a bollard protected bike lane. The Tufts Bus stop is there. Vehicles and ride-shares need to be able to drop people off at the T stop and Movie Theater. People live in the apartments above and need to be able to receive deliveries and guests. Cyclists traveling up College Ave already have a safer and faster route to Teele Square by turning Right on Winter Street. This is a good place for a painted bike lane on the left. There's little door-ing risk because parking is not allowed on that side of the one-way street. Turing Right, a protected lane takes cyclists to the Buena Vista Bike Turn or to the sharrow transition as they leave the commercial area.

While out of the scope of this proposal, a rethinking of the walkway through the Davis Square Park could convert it to an extension of the shared Community Path. From there, cyclists could be routed behind the T stop to merge with the path in the direction of Cambridge, Arlington and Mass Ave. Cyclists are already doing this, so make it official and safer for everyone.

I have submitted these notes and modified plans because, while I am enthusiastic about bicycle safety and safer shared streets, I do not think we should force a major change to this area that it does not need and that could actually make it less safe and less pleasant for pedestrians, visitors and many of the people who live here.

Submitted September 29, 2022

Proposal Slide Show

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1KRqTmwOYFXAuOWg2Z4m-6E4SD7Mf8tPSV44XOX0qcJE/>



Davis Square is a Vibrant Mixed-used Neighborhood